



A FAREWELL DISCOURSE,

PREACHED

IN THE FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, COLUMBIA, S. C.

On Resigning the Charge.

JANUARY 4, 1824



BY THE REV. T. CHARLTON HENRY.



PUBLISHED BY REQUEST.



CHARLESTON, S. C.

PRINTED BY WM. RILEY, 125 CHURCH-STREET.

1824.

FAREWELL DISCOURSE.

ACTS XX. 27.

FOR I HAVE NOT SHUNNED TO DECLARE UNTO YOU ALL THE COUNSEL
OF GOD.

THESE Words are an extract from an impressive valedictory of the Apostle Paul. His was a faithful ministration of the Gospel. Ardent in his zeal, and unremitting in his efforts, he has left a noble example to every servant of the sanctuary. In the address before us we do not, indeed, discover all that oratorical pathos for which the circumstances and feelings of the occasion furnished such abundant room; but we discover much more, we see the real characteristics of the man. His language is simple and nervous. All that is affecting in his appeal is wholly distinct from an ostentatious display of self; and is introduced to serve the single purpose of enforcing his precepts, admonitions and warnings. Even that painful expression, ye "*shall see my face no more,*" which announced a final farewell, while it excited the tears of a bereaved flock, is uttered only to form the premises of the inferential matters which follow: "*Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.*"

It is more than questionable to me, brethren, whether any living minister of the Gospel can found an appeal to the hearts of his people on the same unwearied fidelity with that of the Apostle. His zeal was purified in the furnace of persecution. His spirits were cheered by revelations of unspeakable glory. His heart and his hand were encouraged and strengthened by means unknown in these latter days. But it is far less than questionable, whether every sincere minister of the Gospel may not, and ought not to be, able to terminate his ministration of the word with the language of our text. It is my own humble desire to do so this moment.

A parting scene in the ordinary associations of life is painful at best. Every such change is mingled with a certain, although unconscious, reference to the Sunderings which take place on the precincts of the grave. The changes of time wear their most unwelcome aspect, and "the brief candle" of our earthly existence lessens visibly before us. But the parting scene of a Pastor and his people is of infinitely greater moment. However little value many may attach to the office of ministering in holy things; however frequently it may be viewed as a mere profession, to be lightly assumed, or as lightly laid aside at pleasure; or however frequently the sacred character may be dishonoured by its wearer, at the peril of his own and others' souls, it extends its connections, its dependencies, and its consequences, throughout eternity. The tie which unites a minister and his church is formed by Jehovah himself. The "farewell," which announces its dissolution, cre-

ates a new epoch in the history of every soul concerned. The hand of Providence draws a line below a long account, and then lays it by from the sight, for a future and fearful scrutiny. It is indeed true that whatever measure of mere accident seems to have had a share in forming such a connection, and whatever fitness or unfitness may have seemed to be in it, it was devised by the wisdom of God, and all its remote or nearer causes were brought to bear on its accomplishment, by his own almighty power. And it is equally true, that however firmly or loosely such a connection is wrought, he that ministers is neither more nor less than “a savour of life unto life or of death unto death.” Neither the views, nor prejudices, nor personal sentiments, which may exist between the parties in such a contract, will, in the least, diminish or alter this awful truth. It was under such circumstances, brethren, that I entered on my labours among you; then literally a stranger to every face before me. And it is with a feeling recollection of all this, that I am just about to return back my commission, which brought me to you, to him who honoured me with it.

On such an occasion as this it might be expected that I dwell on private views, detail private feelings, and ponder on private friendships with all that lingering which a valedictory address usually, and almost insensibly, produces. It is true, I could say much on these subjects. I have in my heart a register of gratitude, for kindness and favour, to which I avow myself an insolvent debtor. I shall make no attempt to discharge these arrears. May he who can bless the boon of a

cup of cold water, richly reward every benefactor. For my enemies—and who can claim an exemption from them?—I have only to utter a prayer for their welfare. I have only to say, let their feelings be one with mine. Let them desire my salvation, as in the fulness of my heart I do sincerely desire theirs. If any have ever felt themselves wronged, I pray that this scene of separation may be the tomb of every unhappy feeling. I would that as we part, we may cherish no other sentiments than those which we are willing to carry to the judgment seat, where we meet again.

But I am now to engage in a more important review than that of private pleasures or sorrows. I have to examine the past in relation to official duties. And here I could weep, with unaffected sorrow, in the retrospect of weaknesses, short-comings, and neglects. I have nothing whereof to boast, save an unremitting desire for your spiritual weal. I have much, very much, to lament.

It seems but the other day that I accepted this charge. I have never forgotten its solemn import. It sounds this moment in my ears. I recall the hour when I knelt in that aisle, and the hands of the venerable Presbytery rested on my head. That consecrating prayer is still fresh in my memory, although the lips of him who uttered it are now heard only in Heaven. I well remember the tones of that voice which charged me “before God and the Lord Jesus Christ,” when I was consecrated to the altar of Jehovah. I saw distinctly the varied and multiplied cares, the awful responsibility, and the infinite sanctions, with which I was to

lay hold of this sacred charge. You were given to me as a people. I was presented to you as a Pastor. These transactions, I have already hinted, have not become negative because they are past. Come, then, with me, brethren, standing on this period of time, elevated as it is above the months and the years gone by, together let us look down and survey them. You shall repeat to me that admonition of the Most-High, which should make the ears of us all to tingle: "*When I say unto the wicked, oh, wicked man, thou shalt surely die; if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from this way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Nevertheless, if thou warn the wicked of his way to turn from it; if he do not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul.*" And I, in return, will call you to record that "*I have not shunned to declare all the counsel of God.*" You are this day to judge for yourselves. This last appeal which shall be left, for a moment, in your hands, is to go before us to await our next assembling together.

I. *Professors of the religion of Christ.* To you alone, strictly speaking, belong a pastor's labours and a pastor's care. To others, the minister of the Gospel sustains the widely different relation of ambassador of God to "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel." It is not enough that you be instructed in the speculative doctrines of the written word. You might be armed at all points, as champions of orthodoxy, and contend zealously for what you consider the faith, without a single piece of that panoply which belongs to the

followers of Christ. These things have their place; and that place is an important one. They have not been neglected in the ordinary ministrations to which you have been accustomed. But, after all, they are secondary. It is the practical instructions of the bible to which your attention has been principally directed.

1. *It has been one object of unrelaxed effort to make the line between the duties of the Christian and the maxims and customs of the world as visible and distinct as possible.* It is an adage which may be called fanatical, or bigotted, or at least illiberal, yet it is nevertheless an adage founded on truth, that "the friendship of the world is enmity with God." It is a scriptural truth. It is neither the tenet of a sect, nor the opinion of a sectarian leader. It is the declaration of the Holy Spirit; which neither the maxims of philosophy, nor the improvements of science, nor the changes of customs and manners can qualify. It is a truth which shall last until the funeral pile of nature is kindled.

The kindest manners will not change the general disposition of unrenewed man. And that disposition ever was, and ever will be, at war with the interests of Zion. You shall select the most amiable circle of society. You shall attribute to the members of that circle all that is tender and engaging, and all that is charitable, in the ordinary acceptation of the word; and all that is liberal in sentiment or generous in conduct, in the same acceptation; you have, still, neither more nor less than a phalanx of combined interests against the kingdom of Messiah. I do not mean that these hearts shall be in the open field of battle array.

The melancholy fact is, that until the word of God, in all its comprehensive meaning, come home to the bosom ; until that bosom is made its familiar place ; until there be, in a word, an individuality of application, very different from that indefinite construction of Messiah's message which is commonly adopted, the sinner is warring against his God, though he be insensible of his doings. And it is an insensibility the more to be deprecated, as it is wilful in its character, and the more to be lamented, as it is fatal in its issue. Oh, it is vain to contend on a point which the repeated declarations of the Most High long since set at rest. The man of the world may admit the benevolence and the mercy of Jehovah without a scruple : He may not be unconscious of a frequent pulsation of gratitude for favours received : He may admire and adore that wisdom and majesty which set the planets in their places, and fixed the laws of creation : But he may be, or do, all this, without one principle of redeeming grace in his bosom, or one jot of practical godliness in his heart. Creation's glories will be only as a cheering song, heard with an emotion of pleasure, but with an effect as transient as it is unprofitable. Jehovah's attributes will be praised only because they are not understood ; or rather because they are examined independent of each other, and selfishness has culled a favorite one for itself, and then new-moulded it to suit an insulated interest. Nay, in all this he has not risen a step higher than the Pagan of Greece or Rome ; who had trodden the same ground before him, and felt and declared it unsafe, because it was uncertain. Still, with all this,

plain and incontrovertible truth, as it is, and without one particle of interest at stake in the issue of your conduct, these very men of the world would found laws for your community as a body of Christians; would set bounds to your devotions; would frame rules for the mode and manner of your piety; would prescribe maxims for your conduct. Laws, rules, and maxims predicated on what? on the word of God? on Christian expediency? No; on neither. The one is unconsulted: the other is not understood. There is but a single meaning and a single desire in all this unsolicited and common effort of the man of the world to legislate for the professor of Christianity: and they both refer to an undisturbed conscience in worldly enjoyment. It is not your good that is sought. Nor is it a fear that too much piety, or even too much form of religion may do you harm. Not at all. When the worldling legislates for the Christian, he is only forming a reflex law which is to act back in his own behalf; which is to secure a repose for himself unbroken by the admonitory example of others around him. This is the meaning and the desire, the length and the breadth of all those outcries which are heard from the sensualist, against the practical separation of the Christian; and which render the precepts of the word of God on the subject more necessarily and more fully repeated.

But approach with me nearer to the state of the fact as it is. Let us question the right of the man of the world to direct your views and your conduct, on the most palpable of all grounds, that of his capability. We

will bring in a case in point. It shall be a case of every day's experience. It shall be the line which is drawn between the amusements of the professor of religion and those of the avowed worldling. I do confess that I have been strenuous in my ministry on this subject. And it is by no means a matter which in a future review I shall have cause to regret. In re-touching the subject now, I will not advert to the unreasonableness of this interference of the non-professor with the pursuits of the Christian: I will say nothing of the inexpediency or right of the man of the world to select pleasures which suit his own appetite: If his choice be of this life, and he infringes no direct law of morality, we cannot censure his eager pursuit of all that the earth can give him. It is his portion. It is transient at best. His bitter recollections of the energies of an immortal soul spent and wasted in grasping at shadows, will come on full soon. And if I had no hope of calling him to nobler employments, I would not cause the phantom of a future fear to flit across his way. Nor, in bringing this question to bear, will I advert to that great law of Christian charity, which demands a scrupulous attention to the feelings of a brother, who may be wounded by your worldly compliance; though this single requirement is the spirit of every command in the decalogue.

I will put the question to issue in a different form. I will affirm that the pleasures in reference are inimical to the devotional feelings of the Christian: that they cool the affections; that they superinduce a languor in piety. I appeal to the heart of piety whether

these things be not so. The answer is a plain one. Now, whose negative is it we are to register against this experience of the child of God? who is to be arbiter in a case of such infinite moment? The man who frankly tells us that he never knew a change of heart? The man who acknowledges, honestly and unequivocally, that he is a stranger to the communion of the Christian with his Saviour? Is this equitable? Is it fair? Or will you admit the justice of a decision founded on mere abstract reasoning, when the question is one wholly of experience? And can you hazard the propriety of an action, on which you alone are capable of judging, in hands utterly unable to weigh the subject? And would it be any excuse at the bar of your God, or any comfort in a dying hour, that you were led astray by those who felt no responsibility for you? Can the sensualist stoop one fathom to redeem the spirit which his opinions, strengthened by friendship or affection, contributed to sink into remorse and despair?

I do not mean to confine these remarks to the single exemplification just given. Their application is intended to be general. And I do, once more, solemnly protest against a practice which prevails among those who are accustomed to discuss the subject of religion without feeling or understanding its import: I mean the practice of forming and exchanging views of piety on their own notions of what ought, and what ought not to be; and that without any reference to the Bible; without ever consulting its pages to see how the matter is settled there. You shall see this disposition to fall

back into a religion of nature evinced every day. You shall hear it affirmed that God requires this or that, and no higher sacrifice at our hands; and you shall find that this sacrifice is one very flattering to our natural wishes, and very consistent with our ease. Dear Brethren, you have here neither more nor less than a subterfuge. And by whatever assumed name it may be called, it is neither more nor less than a subterfuge of hypocrisy. It is a system invented in the midst of the light of revelation glaring around it: for hypocrisy is as apt, and far more apt, to shelter itself under a system than to act without one.

Is it, on the other hand, affirmed that a rigid adherence to the practical rules of the Gospel would break in on the social circle? that divisions would be created by a profession of religion? Then, brethren, lodge the complaint against the Gospel itself; against the very substance and spirit of Messiah's instructions. I would not desire to see the circle of friendship broken by a profession of religion. I would see that profession rendered a means of leading others to the same hope. This was one of its very objects; and one of the objects of that command "be ye not conformed to this world." But I would rather see such a friendship cut apart forever, than see an immortal spirit sacrificed at the shrine of earthly affection. It is a sacrifice too dear. No sentiment on earth can demand it.

And what, dear brethren, what do you gain by a conformity with all the maxims of the worldling? You will escape the name of illiberality: but are you really more esteemed for conceding points which your

profession forbids you to concede? Does not this very worldling discover, and, at heart despise, that inconsistency? What do you gain? Is it really true that you will attract others to the loveliness of the Saviour by throwing the garment of a profession *loosely* around you? Is this a means which the Redeemer has promised to bless? Not at all. You will leave others to the conclusion that there is no essential difference between you and themselves. You will convince them that a profession is but a name: that the inclinations and taste are unchanged by religion, or else that you yourselves have never experienced it.

I have but little apprehension of being misconceived in the views expressed. No one can charge me with inculcating an artificial gloom, or a moroseness of manners, as the badge of a profession. The one is as ridiculous as the other is uncourteous. The holy hope of the Christian gives him, of all others, the right to a cheerful demeanour. My prevalent desire has been to induce you to withhold from an experiment in which no one has ever succeeded—in which no one ever can succeed—and which has been the ruin of thousands before you—an experiment to reconcile the conflicting interests of God and mammon. It is an experiment which, if you have any piety at heart, will keep you suspended between Heaven and the earth; with a frame unfit to partake of the joys of the former; and feelings which deprive you of the common zest for the pleasures of the latter.

In all this, I see, most distinctly, that I am not treading on popular ground. I know that I may be contend-

ing with the views of many who hear me. But, Brethern, I have not groped my way in the dark in these matters. The word of God has been my only guide, yet it has been one which I have not feared to follow. I have taught no system of my own. If I had, it would certainly have been one less inimical to the prejudices of a fashionable religion; and more flattering to those passions which a popularity-seeker knows how to take at their flood. If there be a character on earth whose infatuation is more complete than that of others, it is the public teacher, who forms a system of dogmas in needless opposition to the prevailing notions of the day; it is the public teacher, who, without any possible reason for it, ventures to overstretch the line of Gospel precepts, and to mould a scheme of religion, answering no good end for himself, and yet in direct array against the views of others around him. Of all eccentricity this is the most pitiful. Whatever may have been effected in a darker age to favour a selfish end, by such innovations, the present period is too enlightened to furnish the most remote hope of personal gain by encountering popular prejudice.

II. Another point to which I have had occasion to call your attention, as fully as I was capable, is the duty of examining your hearts whether ye be indeed "in the faith." This is a matter in which no one can be judge for you. You are, each, to stand or fall by yourself. Each must assume his individual character, apart from all leanings on others. To render this process more easy, a course of lectures was instituted, di-

rected exclusively to this subject. They are indeed past : but by many of you, it is believed, will never be forgotten. Yet could I again revert to this subject ; could I leave a last appeal on a matter in which, from the facility and commonness of a profession, you are most likely to be deceived ; could I collect in a few sentences all the solemnity of those warnings which call for a rigid and impartial scrutiny of your hearts ; I would announce to you the melancholy state of that soul which starves in the midst of the spiritual plenty which surrounds it ; which sighs with the tremblings of a conscience ever ready to exclaim, under every warning of the law “*thou art the man !*” or resting with the sleep of a conscience that slumbers only to awake when its energies are refreshed for a play of horror : I would tell you that “*The joy of the hypocrite is but for a moment : though his excellency mount up to the Heavens, and his head reach unto the clouds, he shalt perish forever.*” I would say that his hope, while it is cheerless in itself, parries off every truth from the bosom, which might, otherwise, have been open to conviction. I would announce that portentous anathema so terribly told against the confidence of the self-deceiver, “*he shall hold it fast !*” I would speak of that accumulated severity of judgment against the spirit which, not satisfied with simple rebellion against its God, adds treachery to crime, and ventures to stand masked before the Eternal ! I would utter that menace of the Most High, “*Behold all ye that kindle a fire, that compass yourselves about with sparks, walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that ye have*

kindled : this shall ye have of my hand, ye shall lie down in sorrow." I would——but I forget the occasion. Let me realize again that I am addressing you for the last time : that our next meeting in the character of Pastor and people is to be in a settlement for eternity. Whose hopes shall abide the ordeal of that hour ? Which of you will be missing from the band of the faithful ? Who shall gladden kindred hearts with the shout of hosanna, when doubt and fear, and faith, and hope, are lost together, in the realities of Heaven's glory ?

III. As members of the general Church of Christ, I have ever invited you to the exercise of that christian charity which knows no other difference between evangelical sects than that of a name. The worshipping assemblies, in this place, so far as you all retain your own articles of faith, build the same hope on the same broad basis. May God deliver you from that bigotry which makes non-essential particulars its Urim and Thummim ; and, under pretence of promoting its own darling tenets, sacrilegiously tears the body of Christ limb from limb ! There is no point of which the practical infidel takes so much advantage ; nor one which he so successfully wields against your own and Saviour's interests. Christian charity will do more than " take the guage of misery : " more than supplying the wants of the needy, or stanching the wounds of the afflicted. It will look on minor discrepancies of sentiment, with every allowance for human infirmity, while it acquires a lesson of forbearance, and learns to suspect its own infallibility. Like one of old, it will step

backwards, to throw a mantle over the nakedness of a brother, whether his faults be in sentiment, or in deed. Cultivate this grace with all the assiduity with which you cherish a hope of Heaven. Without it, all other qualities will only be as the whitening of a sepulchre, which encloses its mass of rottenness and corruption.

IV. You have been reminded, times without number, of the peculiar claims of the age to an active zeal in favour of the general cause of Zion. He has a very imperfect conception of the great plan of redemption, who confines his ideas of it entirely to its practical tendency on the life ; who overlooks the tenor and design of prophecy, and anticipates the same peculiar characteristics in one age which have distinguished another. And he has a very limited view of duty, who supposes “ the signs of the times ” to have no bearing upon it. Jesus Christ taught the Jews a different lesson. The march of events, and the developement of prophecy proclaim another to us. They call for exertion proportioned to their importance. We live in a period singularly and signally characterized. The oldest of us have lived to witness nothing less than a perpetual series of religious and political revolution, over the whole earth. Every thing is on the move. And every thing has pointed, most clearly, to important changes in the Kingdom of Christ. Every thing has sounded a preparative note to that mighty consummation which awaits the Church of God. These views are not fancies of my own. They have engaged the attention of the most sensible observers. They have excited the interest of the infidel, as well as of

him who never cared to ponder over the page of prophecy. Religious events have kept pace with political changes, and they have transpired of the very character to suit them as they occurred. The knowledge of God is covering the whole earth. The Bible is becoming a part of the furniture of the African hut, and of the American wigwam. The Missionary is planting his footsteps in every land of heathenish darkness. Tracts and Sabbath Schools are spreading the same light among the ignorant and poor, at home and abroad. Such is the zeal of the age in which you live: and it is advancing every successive year. In all this you are called to take your part. As expectants of that kingdom you are invited to the noble office of co-worker with Christ. Live worthy of the period. Little as each of you can accomplish, promote the institutions of religious benevolence to the best of your power. Let it be said that you have not lived for yourself alone. Let that welcome plaudit be yours, which was once applied to one poor as the poorest among you, "*She did what she could.*"

V. In social meetings of worship and prayer, I have endeavoured to engage your interest and your feelings; and you have not been backward to promote them. I have ever believed these meetings nurseries of piety: as well as a favourable means of bringing the truths of the Gospel home to the mind, more plainly and familiarly than the ordinary method. And I would leave it as a parting advice, "forsake not the assembling of yourselves together." May ye long know, and be known of, each other, in the frequent intercourse of

prayer, in type of that general assembly of the first born in Heaven, where ye shall exchange the petitions of faith for the Hallelujahs of the blest.

And now, brethren, it only remains that I bid you farewell. Between many of you and myself, there are ties of spiritual relationship which can be broken by no earthly incident. We shall meet again, where we need take counsel no more on the perplexities of a tempted soul, or the doubts of a timid spirit. Some of your number have fallen asleep before us; yet a very little while, and we shall follow. Stand to your posts, for the hours that remain. Be instant in prayer. Uphold the hands of the pastor whom God shall send you. Avoid every appearance of evil. Seek the approbation of a sanctified conscience. Remember the witnesses who surround you. Remember your covenant vows. “*Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you.*”

II. To those who are without the pale of the Church, the instructions from this pulpit have been of a different nature. As far as I could trace the line of duty, I have endeavoured to follow it by the application of scriptural doctrine, in all its force and pungency, to the natural heart.

I. You will bear me witness, while “I call you to record” this day, how often, and how earnestly, I have reasoned with those with whom I am now to part for ever, and whose present peace has been founded on

those multiplied excuses, through which the conscience has been cheated, and the Gospel rejected. In this hasty review of the past, I revert, almost unconsciously, to those occasions. I seem to hear some of you complain, again, of your weakness, your dependance, your inability to do any thing in your own behalf. And, in turn, you remember how powerful an argument, is gathered from that very fact, to lead you to the strength and the hope of Israel.—You object to the straitness of the gate, and the narrowness of the way; but in the very utterance of this objection, you are reminded how the Saviour draws a reason from it why you should strive to enter in: and, you are bidden to “work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, *because it is God who worketh in you.*”——You affirm that if God intends your salvation, he will effect it, if not, no effort on your part will avail: You are answered that God will exercise no compulsion which is inconsistent with the free agency of his creatures; no other compulsion than that which is effected by the calls of his spirit, and the warnings, and invitations of his word. The deliberate choice of salvation or death is to be wholly your own.—You are fastening a hope on the belief that you are as good as many who have made a profession of religion; I see that hope unhinged again by the admonition that the only standard of your future judgment will be this volume; that, though thousands of professors perish around you, your own doom will be unmitigated by the fact.—You change this ground, and gather confidence, then, in the reflection that so many are in your own condition; but

you hear, in return, that *though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not go unpunished*; and you look through these pages to see the history of those terrible desolations which followed the threatenings of Jehovah.— You sigh while you utter the murmur that religion would deprive you of the pleasures of the earth, and shed despondency and gloom over the social festivities of life: but you are silent when that question returns, —is the God of Heaven a God of cruelty? Will he who suffers you to decline his yoke only at the peril of your soul—will he, after assuring you of this—frame for you a yoke so oppressive that you are obliged to decline it even at the hazard of your everlasting interests? or is any comfort or pleasure expedient and right, and yet denied to those who are brought into “the glorious liberty of the sons of God?”

But why should I recapitulate these things again? I have endeavoured to prove that every excuse of the unregenerate man, no matter what its form, or what the imposing guise it may wear, is an indirect charge against the Creator himself, and partakes of the nature of that subterfuge which was adopted by the guilty head of our race. It remains a confounding truth that if any excuse for rejecting the terms of the Gospel, or for present and past guilt, be admissible, then is God’s requirement that you submit to his grace and government an undue imposition. He knows all the circumstances of your temporal condition: he has scanned every obstruction which is in your way; and yet has he bidden you abandon the life you are leading, under penalty of eternal death. Oh it is worse

than folly to contend with the Almighty, for the little moment of your precarious being, when the hour is so near in which every mouth shall be stopped, and the boldest sinner shall stand the pale and mute and trembling culprit before the throne of his offended God. It is infinitely worse than folly to occupy the hours of tendered grace, in contriving schemes to elude its influence, and in forming excuses for shoving by the arm of mercy.

How many of you have I seen sitting under the droppings of the sanctuary, until habit had mingled a feeling of insensibility with the place and the hour: brought again and again within sight of the festival of love, and hardening under that sun of grace which softened the hearts of others around you: listening to those doctrines which hemmed you in between the single alternative of life or death, while you acquired new art in warding the thrust of the sword of the spirit, and new strength of resolution to jeopardize the fate of the soul on the possible misconstruction of the doctrine proclaimed. Short as the ministration of less than six years has been, I have stood long enough on the watch tower, to behold the young acquiring the art of evasion, to practise it with their God; the mature perfecting in that art; and the more advanced stretching out a withered hand to extinguish a hope already feeble and flickering.

II. To the mind whose complacency arises from an idea of its own generosity; which, in its own peculiar language, claims the privilege of being *led* and not *driven* to Heaven; which professes to stand proof against

the terrors of the law, and the frowns of an incensed Creator ; which openly avows a wounded pride, and a revolting feeling before every argument drawn from the justice of the Almighty ; to such a mind I have shifted the train of my reasoning. I have invoked those sensibilities which you consider alive to all that is tender and inviting. You have seen the God of salvation, though so long neglected and so often repulsed, stooping from the Heavens, not only to offer you redemption, but to plead and pray your acceptance of it. You have heard the affectionate tone of invitation, "Come and let us reason together." You have noted the sympathies of Messiah, who struggled up the mount of Calvary, with the weight of that cross on which he pronounced the work of redemption finished. You have listened to the persuasions of that spirit of grace, who appealed in turn to every sentiment of gratitude and every sense of right. You have beheld the bright company of ministering angels, awaiting the signal of your assent, that they might be the heralds of the joyful news. You have been led, again and again, to the dominions of death, to see him despoiled of his prey, when the departing Christian began the glad shout of victory and triumph. You have been brought within the reach of those loud hosannahs, breaking from the lips of spirits, once in the bondage of sin, like yourselves, but now as pure and spotless as the seraphim with whom they mingle. Oh, brethren, what would you more ? The God who condescends to reason—the Saviour who exhorts and pleads—the Holy Spirit who offers to enter into your every trial, and to succour you in every perplexity—have

you not here a spectacle which affords an inestimable appeal? Can you desire salvation who resist such an appeal?

Oh, how often, when I have noted the frank and independent temper—or that natural temper of heart-felt kindness which is ever ready to succour the suggestions of conscience, or which almost takes the place of conscience when it itself is torpid—how often when I have seen the generous and aspiring disposition, in him who knew not God, have I loved to contemplate what such a man would be, if, like Paul, he brought all his talents, all his hopes, all his feelings, all his influence, and all his ambition, and laid them at the cross of the crucified Jesus! What a harvest of glory would I anticipate to himself! What a revenue of good to the cause of piety and truth! And, let me add, dear Brethren, what a contrast it has seemed, when I have beheld such a soul spending all his energies in trifles that mock his pursuit—and reflected what he might have been!

III. Some of you I have seen wavering between truth and error; between the service of Messiah, and that of the prince of this world; between “the sure mercies of David,” and the fictitious peace of the earth. And there remains not an argument, or a plea, to fix your decision, with which you are not as familiar as myself. In the name of God, I warn you, for the last time, that every moment of this hesitation is so much accumulating certainty of a fixed and permanent doom. I would that I could mingle with this warning something of the solemnity which covers that doom. I

would that I could impress you with something of that deep interest which occupies the bosoms of Angels, while they gaze at the pending issue. I would that I could display to you, in all its completeness, the character of that conflict now existing in your bosoms. You should then, each of you, see a struggle, of which your heart is the theatre, more momentous in its results than the battle of mightiest empires. You should behold the line of these results stretching through eternity. You should mark them in the honoured companionship of God, or in the endless, and yet convulsive gaspings of despair. “How long will ye halt between two opinions?” “How long,” in the little remainder of so much expended forbearance, and such protracted long-suffering? “How long,” in the short respite yet afforded by the wounded spirit of God? Will an aggravation of sin soften the heart? Will a God more offended be more ready to pardon? Will you encounter the most hazardous issue ever encountered in the folly of man,—sinning more, that grace may more abound? Will the chains of your bondage, riveted by habit, be more easily broken? I can only commend you now to a more powerful interference with your present soothing and present peace, than any inquiries of mine can create. Yet a little while, and all anxieties which have existed with either of us on these and all other points, will be completed in the destinies of eternity.

IV. To those who have leaned on what I believed mistaken views of God’s mercy, and have avoided any open or explicit expression of character in religion, I

have labored to unfold clearly and scripturally, the nature of the divine attributes. I have endeavoured to set forth the mercy of God in all its loveliness. I have made it a plea on which I have rested many an appeal. But still I have ever sought to secure it from misconstruction and abuse. I have desired to present it, not as an insulated attribute: but rather as an attribute inseparable from justice and truth: not as a vague and undefined quality, but as perfect and definite in its nature. Not as versatile and variable, to leap forth at every call or beck of our unchastened and misjudging selfishness; but an attribute suiting only a certain preparative disposition of heart, to which alone it can ever be applied, and which alone it could ever possibly benefit. I have ever taught you that all the loveliness which belongs to the character of God, as a father, is of no concern to us, and can never operate to our advantage, until there is a disposition to which it is fitted. Until then, it is in vain, and worse than in vain, to lie supinely among the husks and to talk of the divine goodness to them that are lost. If I have therefore dwelt much on the nature of depravity, and the deceitfulness of sin, and the broadness of the law, it has been only to exhibit the nature of that temper of mind which betrays a consciousness of want—that feeling sense of corruption and weakness—that bitterness of regret for evil—that consciousness of pollution and shame—which, and which alone, will ever invite the attention of mercy. The petitioner must set some value on the boon that he asks. And he that sitteth in the Heavens never meets man as a light offender:

he must *stoop* to raise a fallen creature. Until all this is comprehended and felt, grace can never benefit us. We shall remain the unaltered, unsubdued lovers of sin: praising, at best, a mercy we do not understand.

V. I have yet to appeal to one more class of my hearers: And thanks be to God that I have neither disposition nor power to judge of persons. I refer to those who, under all the varieties of this ministration of the word, may have been completing the last evidences of an insoluble hardness of heart. That cherished carelessness—that eye of vacancy on spiritual things, are the forerunners of the calm which succeeds the departure of the Spirit of God. They announce that condition which follows the sentence, “Let him alone!” Who shudders at the terrible aspect of this doctrine? So do I. But neither your nor my sensations will diminish the truth that the wearied Spirit of God may at last give up the object of its solicitude and care, and man may be left as hopeless for the future as he is thoughtless for the present. My dear Brethren, have such forebodings never reached you? Or have you been so familiar, alike with the mercies of God and the dark realities of eternity that they seem as the tale often told, insipid and tiresome? Or do you not believe these things? You do believe them. Every faculty of your understanding assents to them. Proof after proof has collected before you, and flung its broad light over the path you are travelling. And do you not fear? have you enveloped yourselves with an armour of self-confidence, and bidden defiance to the menaces of Heaven? You do fear. There are

moments when you cannot escape apprehensions which pursue you. Even when without the walls of this sanctuary you have feared. You have trembled when a message from God has told home to your hearts his sovereignty and your dependence ; when that message has spoken through the decease of some who were dear ; and he that will be your judge asserted his own rights, while he threatened to scathe your hopes as he scathed the fruitless fig-tree. Then, notwithstanding all your courage and all your feelings of independence, you could look up for a moment to him whose power you felt as well as saw. And did you not then reflect how “fearful a thing” it might be to “fall into the hands of the living God,” when the lightest tread of his stately steppings carried such terror to the heart ? Have I not seen some of you on the borders of that eternity where our next meeting is to be ? And did you not feel that you were dragging after you the lengthened chain of baffled expectations and disappointed hopes ? I have. You did. And the God of eternity heard the prayers and the vows which you breathed on that occasion. You were carried back to life and strength and health. And now, brethren, where are you ? You are on a higher ground of accountability and privilege than ever. It is there I leave you. And may God, in his infinite mercy, save you from plunging into the depths below it !

Dear Brethren, God now sums up and closes the account between us. Yet before I pronounce the word, adieu—let me once more present the Saviour to you : Let me once more refresh my soul with the sounds of the Gospel—“ *Ho every one that thirsteth, come ye to*

the waters." " *The spirit and the bride say, come. And let him that heareth say, come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the waters of life freely.*"——Oh, for some one word that embodies the whole power of the Gospel, to bring to our common gaze death, judgment and eternity!——My spirit pants, in its lingering, to complete some last and effectual effort to seal your hearts and your feelings to the service of God!——The mingled savours of life and of death are rising around me!——My commission is returned!——It is registered on the scroll of judgment records.——Farewell!







